

OPEN HEARTEDNESS IN THE FACE OF FEAR

CONFRONTATION COMPASSIONATE LISTENING OPEN-HEARTEDNESS IN THE FACE OF FEAR

Recently, a long-time friend said during a visit, "You don't like to be confronted, do you, Jane?" Immediately, I felt aware of the contraction happening inside me...from my wide-eyed and frozen stare, to my dry mouth and throat, to my fast beating heart and my knotted stomach. Gripped by fear, the muscles in my body seized, as I momentarily gazed across the table, and into the eyes of my friend. The symphony of voices from within my searching mind began chiming their varied opinions and feelings. In a moment of Grace, I **made the choice to focus** on the soothing voice that was making its **best effort** to remind me to **breathe!** With self-love, I listened to this gentle voice from **deep within** that calmly reassured me I would be fine; that encouraged me to **be honest**; that asked me to **stay present**. After what seemed like an eternity, I replied, in a fairly calm manner, considering the litany of frenzied voices still singing inside me, "No, I don't."

In the days that followed, I found myself being offered consistent opportunities, through **The Wonder and Mystery of Life**, to witness these behaviors in myself, and in those I was in communication with...in subtle and not-so-subtle ways, and tangible and intangible ways. I recalled my own personal experiences on both sides of each of these behaviors...moments in which I was being confrontational and the moments in which I was confronted; moments of practicing compassionate listening and moments of being truly and compassionately heard; and those **extraordinary moments** of witnessing another remain open-hearted in the face of tremendous fear, and this most recent experience of recognizing my own open-heartedness in the midst of deep fear.

For those of us who are curious, and wish to explore these behaviors within our own life, the following are some possible questions we might ask:

- What do I notice **within myself**, (within my mind and body) as I **witness** those around me engaged in any one of these approaches?
- What is **genuinely** happening for me, or what am I **feeling inside**, when I feel prompted or impelled to confront another?
- What do I typically notice **internally** when I feel I am being confronted?
- What does **compassionate listening** offer me when it is being offered to me?
- What does **my compassionate listening** offer the person sharing with me?
- What tells me **my heart is open**?

- How do I recognize the **open heartedness of another**?
- What are my current beliefs about **remaining open hearted in the face of fear**?
- Have I ever clearly witnessed **another person remaining open hearted in the face of fear**, and if so, how did I feel observing it?

What does each of these behaviors and responses have to **offer** us? Do we notice ourselves having an **affinity** toward any one of these approaches? Do we feel drawn to **observing our own relationship to these behaviors**?

MAY WE EACH COME LOVINGLY FACE-TO-FACE WITH OURSELVES, AND WITH ONE ANOTHER, WITH THE COURAGE TO BE **GENUINELY HONEST**;

MAY WE EACH CONTINUE TO REFINE OUR HEART-FELT ABILITY **TO LISTEN TO...AND TO HEAR...OUR OWN SELF AND THE SELF OF OTHERS, WITH COMPASSION**; and

MAY WE EACH CONTINUE TO EXPLORE THE OPITON OF **REMAINING OPEN HEARTED IN THE FACE OF FEAR**.

Written by Jane Ellen on: March 2, 2007